...condemned the ... progress in the talks.

Street-by-Street War In Chechen Capital

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gudermes, Russia — Russia claimed Friday to have the upper hand in fierce street-by-street fighting in the Chechen capital Grozny, even after rebels demonstrated their freedom of movement by mounting surprise attacks from the rear.

On Thursday, Chechen militants infiltrated Russian positions through underground pipes running from downtown Grozny, which they continue to control. Both sides suffered losses, the military said, without offering details. However, officers in Grozny said about 20 Russian soldiers died in the attacks, which showed how vulnerable the troops are to the highly mobile rebels.

Mystery still surrounded the fate of a Russian general who disappeared in Grozny this week. The military said tersely that Maj. Gen. Mikhail Malofeyev was on neither the lists of the dead nor of those taken prisoner.

Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev refused to speculate about what happened to Malofeyev, saying only that he had been sent to Grozny "to intensify troop operations" and "got into a complicated situation." A Chechen commander claimed Friday that Malofeyev, who disappeared in the Chechen capital Tuesday, had been taken prisoner and was undergoing interrogation.

"Malofeyev is absolutely healthy and is answering investigators' questions," Baudi Bakuyev was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency. He said the Russian military would receive a videotape soon proving the Chechens were holding the general.

Russian aircraft and artillery have been pounding Grozny day and night, and the military claimed Friday that ground troops were making steady, if slow, progress toward the center of Grozny. It claimed 86 militants were killed there over the past two days and said only one Russian soldier was killed and five wounded on Thursday.

AP Photo

A Chechen woman weeps in a refugee camp after she learns of fighting in a village where her sons live.

Still, the military reported continuing stiff rebel resistance in Grozny. The rebels are operating in small groups and trying to find cracks in the Russian blockade, it said. These groups frequently change positions and cut off Russian units from the main forces, it added.

The federal command also said that fighting was continuing for control over downtown Minutka Square and a strategic bridge over the Sunzha River. The Russians previously claimed to have taken the bridge, and the military's acknowledgment Friday reflected that some areas of Grozny have changed hands several times in recent days.

Fighting was also raging Friday near the mouth of the southern Argun Gorge, a key area in the steep southern mountains where thousands of rebels are believed to have taken shelter. The military said the Chechen side had launched several attacks aimed at luring some Russian forces away from Grozny.

...and left dozens of Christian churches and homes destroyed.

Lombok hotels closed their doors, fearing religious violence would flare again, though Indonesia's president warned that tough action would be taken against troublemakers.

The Christians, who had taken shelter at a military base in the main city of Mataram, were escorted by about 200 soldiers to a nearby port, where they boarded a ferry for the neighboring island of Bali.

Violence erupted in Lombok on Monday after thousands of Muslim protesters demanded the government put an immediate end to Christian-Muslim fighting on the Maluku islands, in Indonesia's east, where about 2,000 people have died in the past year.

Abacha's $645M Frozen

Swiss banks have frozen $645 million in accounts belonging to the late Nigerian dictator Gen. Sani Abacha and his associates, investigators said Friday.

It is the largest amount frozen since Switzerland began investigating the bank accounts of former dictators and their cronies, the Federal Office of Police Affairs said.

In September, Nigerian officials asked Switzerland to investigate Abacha, who had been accused of systematically plundering the Nigerian Central Bank and hiding the money in overseas bank accounts. Abacha's five-year rule ended in June, 1998, after he died of an apparent heart attack.

JFK Assassination Finding

Material found on the bullet that killed President John Kennedy did not come from his clothing, according to tests that may raise doubts about a second gunman.

The test results, released Friday by the National Archives, supports the conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone gunman in the Nov. 22, 1963, shooting of Kennedy in Dallas, some assassination researchers say. But others say the results are not significant because the fragments have been contaminated over the years.

$18 for Nixon Cassettes

For $18 each, the public can now buy two dozen 30-minute cassettes of President Richard Nixon's conversations during the Watergate scandal, which led to his resignation in 1974.

The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration made available Friday reproductions of more than 12 hours of unrestricted recordings of tapes relating to Nixon's alleged abuse of government power that were played in a federal courtroom in 1974.

COMPILED FROM NEWS DISPATCHES

NEWSDAY, SATURDAY, JANUARY 22, 2000

Newsday 1/22/00